Redefining MAGTF Logistics

'The Navy and Marine Corps will move beyond logistic interoperability and will seek an integration of their Service logistics processes. . . .'
—Naval Logistics Integration Terms of Reference, 30 July 2003

by LtCol Jonathan O. Gackle

In the August 2004 *Marine Corps Gazette* article, "An Imperative for Change: The Case for Logistics Modernization" by Gen Richard I. Neal, et al., the authors note two driving factors that make a compelling case for ground logistics modernization (LogMod)—unresolved logistics challenges and future operating concepts. As with ground logistics, these two factors also drive the need to modernize Marine aviation's expeditionary logistics model—the Marine Aviation Logistics Support Program (MALSP).[1] Today's logistics challenges in sustaining the global war on terrorism give increased urgency to modernizing ground and aviation logistics because the solutions to these challenges lie within the transformed end state of tomorrow.

The Marine aviation LogMod initiative is called MALSP II.[2] The MALSP II end state is characterized by, among other things, a smaller and more agile footprint, adaptability, increased operational reach, and the ability to operate from a seabase in support of expeditionary operations. These end state requirements coincide with outcomes that the ground logistics community has set for its LogMod initiative. In the article referenced above, the authors conclude—after a comprehensive review of future warfighting documents—that to execute seabasing and expeditionary maneuver warfare (EMW) in 2015, ". . . you need a seabased maintenance capability, integrated supply chains, integrated logistics C2 [command and control], and a reduced logistics footprint."

LogMod and MALSP II are enablers to seabasing and EMW. They are concurrent modernization initiatives aimed at similar results and should not be conducted independently. Future operating concepts compel Marine Corps ground and aviation logistics to align modernization strategies now and synchronize to a single, redefined "Marine air-ground task force (MAGTF) logistics" target in 2015, with the following principal characteristics: a common logistics process, a single logistics information technology (IT) solution, and a broad-based logistics training and education plan.

MAGTF Logistics and Maritime Prepositioning Force (Future) (MPF(F))

In orienting to a true MAGTF logistics mindset, it's helpful to consider MPF(F), a critical component of seabasing. One of the platform alternatives for MPF(F) incorporates a seabased maintenance capability for aviation and ground equipment. If MPF(F) serves as a seabased maintenance platform, the goal should be to accommodate this capability with a common MAGTF logistics process and a single MAGTF logistics IT solution. It makes sense that an AH–1Z Cobra mechanic and an expeditionary fighting vehicle mechanic working on the same MPF(F) platform should be supported by the same IT system when documenting maintenance, requisitioning parts, and completing work orders. Additional efficiencies are realized when a single MAGTF distribution system is used to track ground and aviation equipment parts delivered to the same seabased platform. Finally, to mitigate space constraints aboard MPF(F), the MAGTF logistics footprint could be substantially reduced by integrating supply functions and combining intermediate-level workspaces that are common to aviation and ground equipment (e.g., tire/wheel repair, battery, radio/communications, support equipment, structures, etc.).

Seizing the Integration Initiative

To the critics who may see more obstacles than opportunities in advancing toward a redefined MAGTF logistics construct in 2015, it's important to consider the backdrop. If future operating concepts prohibit the status quo, then the fundamental question is—if not now, when? In the context of EMW and seabasing, it's imperative that Marine Corps ground and aviation logistics seize the integration initiative now, during the requirements generation phase of 2015. Moreover, LogMod presents a compelling integration opportunity because of its end-to-end scope and concurrent timing with MALSP II.

LogMod's logistics operational architecture (LogOA) is the roadmap for providing integrated logistics support to the MAGTF. Developed as the requirements document for Global Combat Support System-Marine Corps (GCSS-MC), the LogOA represents the "to be" vision for conducting ground logistics on the battlefield. To determine the "can, should, how" of MAGTF logistics integration (MLI), a high-level gap

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analysis of Marine Corps ground and aviation logistics processes was conducted during May and June. The objectives were to determine commonalities and gaps between the two processes, validate if—and determine how—the Marine Corps should integrate MAGTF logistics, and identify MLI requirement areas for GCSS-MC Block II.

Results of the gap analysis demonstrated that high-level supply/logistics chain functions were common between ground and aviation logistics. Further, the analysis showed that LogMod material readiness process improvement efforts currently underway to realign supply, maintenance, and distribution functions provide opportunities to enable MLI.

When looking at MLI through the prism of LogMod, differences in how Marine Corps ground and aviation logistics maintain, manage, and deliver resources to the warfighter are less daunting, and the cultural divide between the two communities is diminished. In essence, the gap analysis validated the feasibility of real transformation—finally integrating all logistics resources in the MAGTF.

MLI—Enabler to Naval Logistics Integration (NLI)

Ground and aviation logistics' transformation from discrete communities in 2005 to a single MAGTF logistics community that is integrated and prepared to support EMW and seabasing in 2015 is rooted in a larger, more encompassing effort to integrate all "naval" logistics. In July 2003 Navy and Marine Corps Service logistics chiefs signed an agreement designed to pave the way toward full NLI. MLI, placed in the strategic framework of NLI, is a critical enabler that will help ensure future success of the MAGTF and other naval expeditionary forces.

LtGen Kelly and LtGen Hough complete signing MLI TOR. (Photo courtesy of HQMC.)

To establish the basis for integration of Marine Corps ground and aviation logistics under the NLI umbrella, LtGen Richard L. Kelly, Deputy Commandant, Installations and Logistics (DC I&L), and LtGen Michael A. Hough, DC, Aviation (DC Avn), recently signed an MLI terms of reference (TOR). The formal establishment of MLI within the framework of NLI has particular significance because Marine aviation logistics falls under Navy governance for logistics processes and IT systems. The nature of this relationship places Marine aviation logistics as the nexus between "big Navy" logistics and Marine Corps ground logistics and, thus, compels these communities to address more formidable gaps in NLI, driving it to an end state characterized by a "common process" and a "single system" for all tactical logistics components of the naval enterprise.

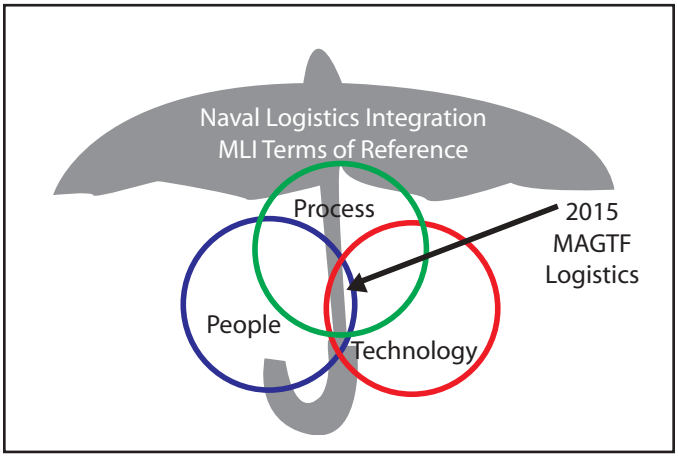

Figure 1.

MAGTF Logistics Cross-Staffing

The MLI TOR signed by DC I&L and DC Avn cemented the strategic partnership between Marine Corps ground and aviation logistics. To underscore the importance of MLI and ensure forward progress, ground and aviation logisticians have been cross-staffed to key billet assignments. These billet assignments, as well as the MLI strategy that guides ground and aviation logistics to an integrated end state, are aligned to the three pillars of LogMod—process, technology, and people. (See Figure 1.)

To facilitate ground and aviation logistics collaboration and ensure forward progress to a common process solution, an aviation logistician has been staffed to the LogMod Transition Task Force as the aviation logistics subject matter expert (SME). Likewise, a ground logistician currently augments the Plans and Strategy Section within the Aviation Logistics Support Branch (ASL), Headquarters Marine Corps (HQMC). An aviation logistician has also been assigned to the GCSS-MC Program Office as the aviation logistics SME on technology matters. Finally, HQMC (ASL) committed force structure to Marine Corps University, so an aviation logistician is now on permanent staff at the School of MAGTF Logistics. This billet solidifies ground and aviation logistics alignment to the "people" pillar and will help shepherd development

of a comprehensive MAGTF logistics training and education plan inclusive of aviation logistics requirements.

Conclusion

Within the strategic framework of NLI, and in the context of EMW and seabasing, Marine Corps ground and aviation logistics is moving on a collaborative path to MLI. The partnership between DC I&L and DC Avn, formalized in the MLI TOR, is essential in driving toward integration—not mere interoperability—of ground and aviation logistics functions. The 2015 end state is defined by a common MAGTF logistics process, a single MAGTF logistics IT solution that supports the warfighter, and a broad-based MAGTF logistics training and education plan. MAGTF logistics—as redefined here—is a precondition to NLI and, by extension, the surest path to improving the effectiveness of Marine Corps and Navy warfighting capabilities in the 21st century.

Notes

1. MALSP enables rapid task organization and deployment by use of contingency support packages (CSPs), the primary MALSP building blocks. CSPs contain predetermined allowances of spare parts, support equipment, mobile maintenance facilities, and personnel needed to sustain Marine aviation in combat.

2. MALSP II applies new technologies and reengineered business processes to establish an innovative framework by which CSPs are reshaped. A system of "buffers" and use of buffer-sizing methodology changes the dynamic from 30- to 90-day fixed CSP allowances that are pushed into theater to a reshaped, scaled down package that is selectively positioned and flowed to the warfighter through demand pull.

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